

David Schenker Biography

David Schenker is the Taube Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute. Confirmed by the Senate on June 5, 2019, he served as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs through January 2021. In that capacity, he was the principal Middle East advisor to the secretary of state and the senior official overseeing the conduct of U.S. policy and diplomacy in a region stretching from Morocco to Iran to Yemen, with responsibility for eighteen countries, the Palestinian Authority, and Western Sahara. He also supervised more than 9,000 staff and administered an annual budget in excess of \$7 billion.

In policy terms, he led the bureau's efforts to advance American interests abroad and strengthen U.S. partnerships and alliances across the region. Via diplomacy and the effective allocation of resources and assistance—as well as through imposition of sanctions—he worked to promote human rights, deter terrorism, fight corruption, and push back against regional adversaries. In addition to developing and implementing the U.S. strategy on China in the region, he worked to heal the Gulf rift between Qatar and neighboring states, resolve intractable conflicts in Libya and Yemen, consolidate the Abraham Accords, and counter malign Iranian influence in the Middle East.

Prior to joining the State Department, Schenker worked as the Aufzien Fellow and director of the Beth and David Geduld Program on Arab Politics at The Washington Institute from 2006 to 2019. During that period, he authored dozens of op-eds, journal articles, and PolicyWatches about Jordan, Lebanon, Hezbollah, and Egypt, among other topics, and contributed chapters to Institute monographs such as [*Beyond Islamists and Autocrats: Prospects for Political Reform Post Arab Spring*](#) (2017) and [*No Good Outcome: How Israel Could be Drawn into the Syrian Conflict*](#) (2013). He also published a chapter on U.S.-Lebanese relations in [*Lebanon: Liberation, Conflict, and Crisis*](#) (Palgrave, 2009), and authored [*Egypt's Enduring Challenges*](#) (2011), an Institute monograph focusing on the post-Mubarak situation.

Previously, from 2002 to 2006, Schenker served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as Levant country director, the Pentagon's top policy aide on the Arab nations of the Levant. In that capacity, he advised the secretary and other senior Pentagon leadership on the military and political affairs of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories. He was awarded the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service in 2005.

Prior to joining the government in 2002, Schenker focused on Arab governance issues as a research fellow at The Washington Institute, and worked as a project coordinator for a Bethesda-based contractor responsible for large, centrally funded USAID programs in Egypt and Jordan. He also authored the Institute books [*Dancing with Saddam: The Strategic Tango of Jordanian-Iraqi Relations*](#) (copublished with Lexington Books, 2003) and [*Palestinian Democracy and Governance: An Appraisal of the Legislative Council*](#) (2001). His writings on Arab affairs have appeared in a number of prominent scholarly journals and newspapers, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Jerusalem Post*.

Education

M.A., University of Michigan; Certificate, Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA), American University in Cairo; B.A., University of Vermont